

University of Groningen

Biopolitics and Media Power in the Online Dance Remake

Mcgee, Kristin

Published in:
Popular Music and Society

DOI:
[10.1080/03007766.2019.1555891](https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2019.1555891)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2019

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Mcgee, K. (2019). Biopolitics and Media Power in the Online Dance Remake: Remixing Beyoncé's "****Flawless" in the YouTube Archive. *Popular Music and Society*, 42(1), 22-41.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2019.1555891>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.



Biopolitics and Media Power in the Online Dance Remake: Remixing Beyoncé's "***Flawless" in the YouTube Archive

Kristin McGee

To cite this article: Kristin McGee (2019) Biopolitics and Media Power in the Online Dance Remake: Remixing Beyoncé's "***Flawless" in the YouTube Archive, *Popular Music and Society*, 42:1, 22-41, DOI: [10.1080/03007766.2019.1555891](https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2019.1555891)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2019.1555891>



© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 18 Dec 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 868



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



OPEN ACCESS



Biopolitics and Media Power in the Online Dance Remake: Remixing Beyoncé's "***Flawless" in the YouTube Archive

Kristin McGee

Arts, Culture and Media, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

This article examines the dance sequences from Beyoncé's 2013 video "***Flawless" to highlight the centrality of popular black dance within contemporary culture. Further, it looks beyond Beyoncé's corpus to critically examine the dance remake, a forum in which dancers harness "media power" (Carroll) within the YouTube archive to re-signify Beyoncé's work through collective choreographed dance. In this environment, dancers construct alternative biopolitics grounded by localized and participatory modes of identification. In short, this article argues that Beyoncé's deeply personal and multifaceted poetics, when remixed via collective articulations, prompt non-essentialist negotiations of black culture's intersectionality. Ultimately such intersectional responses to Beyoncé's videos complicate recent debates about feminism, resilience, and sexuality within the music industry. It is also within the YouTube archive where the choreographer has assumed an elevated yet precarious status.

Introduction

Since 2013, pop music artists have increasingly enlisted gendered discourse about resilience and crisis in their performances and online debates. These range from empowering representations of girl culture to objectifying images of women's dancing bodies amid urban scenes of disruption and decay. By re-enacting such contradictory expressions, pop stars variously forge bonds with female fans, while maintaining broader interest from non-female consumers of mainstream hip hop. Such powerful and paradoxical representations also reference, intertextually, the historically entrenched sexism and exploitation of, especially, black female stars within the music industry.

Most recently, public debates about sexism, feminism and pop culture erupted around the most significant global female pop star to emerge since 2010, Beyoncé Knowles. Cumulatively Beyoncé's performances since 2013, including the release of her 2013 visual album *BEYONCÉ*, her 2013 biopic *Life Is But a Dream*, and her 2016 visual album *Lemonade*, have been widely debated as either promoting a feminist cause or as exploiting the label. Conversely, her online feminist pledge, her tours with an all-women instrumental band, and her explicit incorporation of Chimamanda Ngozi

CONTACT Kristin McGee  k.a.mcgee@rug.nl

© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

Adichie's feminist TEDx speech into the video "***Flawless," led to broader debates within the feminist community about the impact of celebrities who publicly align themselves with feminist issues.

I'll not rehash those debates here,¹ but rather reveal how the complexity of meanings elicited by Beyoncé's dance-dominant work inspired multi-faceted "counter publics" through the online production and reception of dance remakes and choreographies (Pullen). Here, I focus upon dance as an embodied discursive public sphere, one that continually engages with Beyoncé's work within the highly adaptable and competitive frame of neoliberalism. The amateur and professional reception of Beyoncé's work by young, semi-professional dancers exhibits characteristics of a performed "resilience" now populating the complex media landscape surrounding music video (James). The necessity to "hustle" and the broader competition-driven imperative of popular dance is not new; rather, the cultural dynamics driving competitive dance emerged during the early twentieth century through a process of innovation, borrowing, and stylization, a process depicted as "stealing steps" by dance scholar Anthea Kraut. Throughout this prior transformative century, running parallel with the public performance and commodification of black dance was a process of imitation, "embodied citation," and standardization by white Hollywood dancing stars (Stearns; Fogarty, "Gene Kelly" 91–92).

Considering this entrenched history of bodily accumulation within the music and film industry, this article positions two interrelated objectives, which prioritize popular dance as a defining facet of contemporary culture. First, drawing from her visual album *BEYONCÉ*, it aims to examine the ways in which Beyoncé's complex star text and artistic self-representation engage critically with this (undertheorized) dance past; in doing so, it aspires to better situate dance as a central facet of her aesthetically challenging intersectionality. In many respects, Beyoncé's complex media output counters dominant narratives (such as the victim or hyper-sexualized dancer) traditionally informing assessments of black women's artistic and bodily worth. As a partial refusal to embrace the monolithic status of such narratives, Beyoncé commandeers audiovisual screens to fashion her identity in relation to more fluid conceptions of black culture than those proposed by mainstream Hollywood.

Some of the most compelling critical reflections of both Beyoncé's politics and audiovisual work appear in the fields of black cultural studies. For example, Marquita Smith evaluates Beyoncé's 2013 album *BEYONCÉ* through the critical lens of hip-hop feminism. As a performer of an embodied hip-hop feminism, Beyoncé addresses the unique subjectivities of black women and provides a performed negotiation of the "intersecting conditions of sexism, classism, and racism" (Smith 230). Aisha Durham, too, situates Beyoncé's work within critical hip-hop studies. She understands Beyoncé's work, especially her music videos, as representations of the hip-hop dreamworld, in which the artist's body stimulates intertextual readings from the backwards gaze, to enactments of middle-class sophistication through coded interpretations of fashion, color, and hair (Durham 41–45). Conversely, Beyoncé's controlling gaze, the enactment of an alternative beauty ideal (foregrounding her voluptuous body), and her ability to enact space and place (see Houston), reposition this hegemonic gaze to offer multiple readings. Such symbolically performed negotiations of class, artistry, sexuality, and cultural identity manifest not only in the sonic and visual images of Beyoncé's visual

albums, but also in the transmedial and participatory environment (*Jenkins*) of YouTube, one of the most potent spheres within which Beyoncé's star identity is evaluated, although it is generally overlooked by media, popular music, and feminist scholars.

Second, cognizant of the range of meanings attributed to Beyoncé's performing body, this article theorizes one of the most under-recognized facets of her artistic reception, that is, the body of Beyoncé-inspired dance remakes by artists who distribute their work within the YouTube archive. Here, the global circulation of pop stars (such as *Beyoncé*) acts as discursive fodder for the resignification and poetics of a bodily participatory culture. Along with a variety of other artistic and musical sources – but especially through the political act of collective dance – this participatory public integrates popular music into its collaborative orbit for interpretation, dialogue, and performative contestation. By examining two cases epitomizing the increasingly prevalent and respected dance remake genre, the *professional choreographed studio remake* and the *online community dance remake*, I'll argue that dance, as a collective art form, continues to challenge the hegemonic texts promoted by the mainstream music industry. Each of these examples reflects upon the contingencies of the “sonic color line” (*Stoeve*) for guiding our recognition of music video; and each variously adopts “media power” to forge community bonds connected to Beyoncé's broader image as a complex, politically engaged black feminist. Both cases reveal how collective performances of gender and race remain paramount for repositioning the power of women and girls within our current dance-oriented popular culture.

Engaging the Legacy of Black Dance in *BEYONCÉ* the Visual Album

On 13 December 2013, Beyoncé Knowles released 14 songs and 17 music videos on iTunes as a unified multi-mediated work. According to press releases, this was the first, so-called visual album. Upon the visual album's release, Beyoncé declared that, for her, music is inherently visual. Considering the relevance of music video for her international success, it's not surprising that she undertook its expansion into a broader, more visually and thematically contingent format. Prior to Beyoncé, other commercial artists released videos to publicize the release of a new album. Yet when released in this order, the status of music videos paled in comparison to the cultural, aesthetic, and economic capital attached to entire albums.

As in earlier decades, during which the music videos of, especially, Michael Jackson played a prominent role in reinvigorating the entire culture of dance,² Beyoncé's twenty-first-century positioning of choreography was key to her global success in the online remake environment. Moreover, her music videos built upon earlier precedents for new presentations of innovative black dance styles, especially the music videos of Michael Jackson. Like Jackson, Beyoncé popularized dance for mainstream music audiences in the video format. Part of her artistry arose from the unique ways in which she integrated popular (black) styles from various periods within broader paradigms of professional and commercial dance, especially the well-known choreography of now canonized jazz and musical theatre producers and especially Bob Fosse (whose famous style itself adapted black dance styles). As inspiration for today's dance publics, including the YouTube dance remakes

I discuss below, Beyoncé's innovative popular choreography artfully references this diverse history while also reflecting her vast cultural knowledge. In Stuart Hall's terms, Beyoncé's oeuvre, as symbolic of black popular culture, consistently re-emerges as hybrid praxis, engendered by performers who cajole and extend the practices of existing genres to meaningfully revitalize past traditions. By repositioning contemporary dance within a field that persistently required black women to enact "controlling images" and colonial fantasies regarding race and sex, Jackson, and later Beyoncé, altered the terms of artistic agency and attribution historically constructed by the industry (Brown; Davis; Harrison; Griffin; Pough).

In her study of black theatrical dance in relation to US copyright law, Anthea (Kraut) uncovers the disparities between attributions of value within the film and music industry for various artistic roles such as black dancers versus white songwriters. She reveals how notions of white "artistry" versus "natural" black talent led to unjust mechanisms for conveying authorship and distributing financial reward within the industry, arguing,

The failure to recognize the intellect and innovation behind black expressive forms, especially those involving the body, enabled a bifurcation between individual white artistry and collective, "innate" black talent that long helped justify the denial of copyright protection to African American cultural producers. (175)

Kraut also explicates the challenges introduced by a system of copyright set to law (1909) before film would mechanically reproduce dance steps as international commodities. In this earlier moment, dance-centered films descended from the traditions of minstrelsy (and its economic antecedent of slavery), where black dancers were required to negotiate the double bind "between selling one's bodily labor and being a salable body?" (Kraut 94) and thus their innovative choreography became contested objects of ownership and artistic control. Of course, systemic racism long impacted the ability of black musicians to earn comparable pay scales to their white counterparts in the music industry (see Kofksy), yet the compensation and affirmation of dance as a (black) cultural art form worthy of artistic status still suffers from such longstanding cultural biases about the body, dance, and other non-verbal arts (Kraut; Carroll; Fogarty, "Unlikely Resemblances"; Hubbard).

While Michael Jackson is revered internationally for his signature dance moves from the "moon walk" to the "robot move," he earned no copyright royalties for their creation. Pop stars Jackson and Knowles rather gained popularity and financial success by integrating their highly individualized, dance-driven personas into their audiovisual performances. Within this context, each asserted their authority over several facets of their artistic work and especially the prominence of innovative dance choreography.

In a broader sense, Hall views transformations (such as the increased popularity of black dance within music video) as an active negotiation of essentializing representations of black culture within the so-called global postmodern dominant. Moreover, the contributions of innovative black artists in this international sphere remain essential for the refutation of the media industries' prolific use of strategic and commodified essentialisms. Hall's reflections on the contradictory nature of popular culture aptly illuminate the reception of Beyoncé's most recent visual

album, especially in light of the increased discourse surrounding feminism and the music industry since 2013.

“***Flawless”

Prior to her visual albums, Beyoncé had attained international popularity with young audiences for her powerful, sexy dance routines, yet the artistic quality and character of her 2013 visual album differed significantly from her previous dance-centered work. For one, the visual album enlists abstract narratives, oblique temporal sequences, and sophisticated literary and artistic references. Further, the high-quality editing techniques used in the videos contributed to an advanced cinematographic aesthetic. The filmic turn in Beyoncé’s work resulted in pieces that generally excluded choreographed dance sequences. The only video in the album to present a prominent, easily excerpted dance sequence is “***Flawless,” a song quickly debated in terms of its feminist and intersectional body politics.

“***Flawless” features Houston-style, bass drum-heavy hip-hop verses both chanted and sung by Beyoncé and others. It also combines her personal text with the now well-circulated TEDx talk excerpt from Nigerian novelist and feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Combined with this feminist speech, Beyoncé’s politics are dramatized in a deeply intertextual, documentary style. Queen Bey’s torn grunge clothing juxtaposed aside close-ups of handsome skinheads in garages and basements evoke images of the visually motivated punk scenes of the late 1970s and 1980s.³ These too are tied into representations of the practices expected within such popular music spaces, namely the mosh pit, which acts as the heavily racialized bodily backdrop, manipulated into a dreamy, slow-motion sequence in which Beyoncé floats monumentally among thrashing bodies, a feminine and black intrusion into a space typically gendered male and white. The sequence’s minimalistic soundscape allows full intelligibility of Adichie’s message. In other words, the catchy repetitive harp ostinato and Beyoncé’s breathy, melismatic high register “oohs” take second string to the verbal articulations declaring the double standards facing young women. But the most memorable sequence of the video, which points to the history of black popular music video, is the dance sequence, which occurs toward the end of the second to last chorus. Its musical placement allows the video’s feminist speech to culminate into real physical action. Here, Beyoncé leads this corporal call to arms in an expressionistic routine in classic pyramid formation with four supporting female dancers.

In the dance sequence, Beyoncé’s venomous facial expression (edited in compressed, rough cuts), her rugged street clothing, tangled hair, and rapid hand movements capture the aggression and confidence of a now fully mediatized feminist mode of address. By including this collaborative dance, Beyoncé and her production team provided at least one video, which actively and commercially engages with her dance-oriented public, most apparent in past audiovisual work such as “Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)” (2008) and “Run the World (Girls)” (2011). Her exceptional skill in popular dance re-emerges, but this time she delivers a combination of theatrical, horror film-inspired movements (jagged head shaking movements, splayed hands rotating inside and out near the face – a movement intertextually referencing the ring choreography of “Single Ladies”) and jazz and hip-hop dance styles (low bounces, body,

shoulder and hip rolls, hair tosses, pelvis thrusts, and shoulders leaning back while pulsing to the back beats). The juxtaposition of these movements against the feminist chant imbues them with more than the bodily angst suggested by the punk sartorial style. As Marquita Smith notes, the dance's intersectional feminist perspective is reinforced by the repetition of the phrase "I Woke Up Like This," which signals that Beyoncé's "black femininity is unchanged as the markers of race and gender are often culturally and socially fixed" (Smith 234). Even in this big budget piece, the dance remains part and parcel of the history of black popular culture. Here, with her angular and chopped choreographed arm and leg movements punctuated by her grotesque facial expressions, she honors Jackson's *Thriller*-era hybrid existential dance and his rebellious movements, first driven by the black bodily poetics of jazz, hip hop, pop music, and modern dance. Considering this choreography's intersectional gendered body presentation, it is therefore not surprising that especially this sequence stimulated a variety of both semi-professional and amateur dance remakes, which were projected into virtual dance community platforms such as YouTube. As Kirsten (Pullen) suggests, in this context, YouTube offers evidence of both participatory culture, and of the vitality of dance for the articulation of diverse counter publics. In the many YouTube dance remakes of Beyoncé's large music video corpus, it is therefore not surprising that such remakes embodied intersectional alternatives to dominant ideals of beauty, gender, sex, and race in line with the unorthodox bodily politics of both Queen Bey and the King of Pop.

Theorizing Media Power and Remix in Online Dance Culture

To date, relatively few scholars have examined the significance of dance remakes within the context of remix culture, a concept which still conjures notions of sonic over corporeal or visual alteration (Lessig; Navas). One dance-centered work that gained significant attention in the remix economy was Beyoncé's "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" (2008). Priscilla Ovalle's analysis of the "Single Ladies" dance remake, "Walk It off Fosse," incorporates Stoevers's concept of the "sonic color line," an "interpretive site where racial difference is echoed, produced, and policed through the ear."⁴ She reveals how such dialogically informed remakes confirm the socially constructed character of performing bodies as dancing bodies always already foreground their racialized mobility and historical reception contexts⁵ (Ovalle). Philippa Thomas critiques the authenticity debates surrounding both Beyoncé's "Single Ladies" remake and all the other online "editions" circulating within the YouTube archive, which pit Fosse's genius against Beyoncé's imitative inauthenticity. Here, Thomas reveals how the "Cartesian duality" continues to inform the reception of remix dance culture, where white choreographers like Fosse are praised for their intellect while black female dancing stars are understood as ciphers of male intellect, their talents dismissed as natural expressions of the feminine body (295). Recalling Stoevers's "sonic color line," Mary Fogarty, too, reveals how the aesthetic citational practices surrounding "Single Ladies" remain dependent upon the recognition of culturally established audio and visual references. Beyoncé's incorporation of the gendered re-configuration of "Walk It Off Fosse" stimulated an emerging aesthetic community (the "dance sleuths") within YouTube, which quickly positioned new criteria, such as originality, for assessing Beyoncé's value

as an artist (Fogarty, “Unlikely Resemblances”). The following analysis of online dance remakes builds upon these frameworks, which interrogate the ideologies of authenticity while also prioritizing a greater recognition of how the sonic color line influences the reception of works that self-consciously “signify” across temporal and cultural frames (Ovalle).

In her work on the 1990 swing dance revival, Samantha Carroll extends the notion of dance’s culturally contingent intelligibility in arguing that the expansion of social media inevitably afforded new forms of social power and influence for particular dancers and dance styles. Such “media power,” she posits, endowed performers with the ability to produce and disseminate media texts and to see their “interests and ideology represented in these texts and discourses” (188). By tracing the uneven relation between media access and the representation of black popular culture, Carroll reveals how black performers were rarely endowed with the authority to control such representations (188). Within the YouTube dance remake community, dancers begin to reverse such power dynamics as they circulate their unique dances outside of the jurisdiction of the traditional music industry. When aligned with such non-conventional dance contexts, acquired media power necessarily destabilizes the Cartesian duality that shapes dominant cultural evaluations of black-inspired dance, while also performatively engaging the sonic color line through intertextual references to Beyoncé’s creative, hybrid dance.

Given this history, we see that the ability of non-white artists to determine how their bodies are represented in audiovisual media speaks to a profound shift in the relations between media, the biosphere, and cultural actors within the public sphere. Because Beyoncé’s audiovisual work elicits multifaceted readings, those able to harness the necessary “media power” to interpret and respond to it reflect an increasingly intersectional approach toward dance as a political act. Through the expanding online dance remake community, diverse dance-centered publics emerge, promoting performances that indirectly interpret her work in ways failing to cohere one-dimensionally with either the resilience (overcoming of past victimhood) narratives of black performing women historically, nor singularly with the anti-feminists or self-fashioning commodification arguments of post-feminists.

The Dancing Turn in Popular Culture

With the rise of Michael Jackson and his signature dance as an essential facet of his celebrity image, the industry gradually incorporated professional dance into its star-making matrix. YouTube, and its role as a global archive, facilitated the transition of cultural values attached to performing dancing bodies. By staging the role of the lead choreographer, one connected to the popular music industry, dance studios jockey for space within such matrixes – acquiring cultural capital for their performers and teachers, yet they’ve also successfully promoted dance remakes as a creative outlet for intercultural collaboration.

Since 2010, the appearance of relatively high-quality dance studio videos has expanded within social networking sites and especially YouTube. This phenomenon, manifest within the broader online remix community, involves connecting and responding to hits circulating within the international music video field. Dance remakes typically choreograph new routines to sequences from mainstream pop hits. In contrast

to mainstream pop videos, where dancers often conform to Western standards of beauty and physicality, in these remakes, groups more likely feature diverse body types and ethnicities, yet each group accentuates one lead dancer positioned more prominently in the first line. Even in this local, collaborative context, this arrangement foregrounds the neoliberal frame of modern commercial dance.

Within such studio remakes, dancers create a short but often highly challenging piece of choreography for several groups of from three to seven dancers to perform, one after the other. This repetition effectively renders the dance combination quite memorable, while also promoting the ethos of intense competition and collaboration within a particular school. It also aids in promoting the skill of the dancers and in “branding” the individual style of the studio’s lead choreographer. Generally, at the end of such a video, credits roll, listing the name of the studio, the filmmaker, the dancers, and finally, the choreographer who often waves or struts in front of the camera as the other students cheer and clap. These videos present high energy and sometimes virtuosic performances; one might speculate that choreographers study other studio’s work to “steal steps” or situate their unique styles within the international “urban” dance landscape. This practice is not unique to the USA, as dance studios throughout the world promote their art through YouTube within the context of dance-oriented remake videos of international pop music hits.

An essential element is not only these videos’ connections to mainstream pop culture (typically with a hip hop, black music, or “urban” edge) but to dance itself. Here the various innovative choreographers and their semi-professional dancers occupy center-stage, essentially upstaging the music and the centrality of the pop star, such as Beyoncé. However, familiarity and even industry connections to “official” videos provides a context for paying tribute to pop stars and their fans, while subverting their economic and industrial dominance by engaging in borrowing, adaptation, and burlesquing of established star texts; such star texts encompass not only specific signature dance moves, but personal histories, sartorial styles, and expressions of affect.

Since this practice expanded in recent years, particular dance studios gained reputations for their innovative choreographers and high level of dancing. In this climate, The Millennium Dance Complex in Los Angeles emerged as the most successful in part because of its connection to the existing popular dance music industry. To date, many of the studio’s most revered dancers have worked for the world’s most successful dance-driven pop stars including Britney Spears, Usher, Katy Perry, and Justin Timberlake.

The studio opened in 1992 when Broadway dancer/studio owner Ann Marie Hudson, together with partner and husband Robert Baker, moved to LA to start a dance studio connected to the television industry. Eventually they purchased the Moro Landis Studios, the most significant LA dance studio from the 1950s to the 1970s. This landmark studio, developed by celebrated dancers George Moro and Ruth Landis, was the go-to studio for entertainment productions seeking jazz and popular dancers.

In 1992, hip hop was popular throughout LA, although according to Hudson, no courses were offered in New York as many teachers considered hip hop a passing fad. Despite such elitist dismissals, Hudson quickly adapted the style for their new studio. In the history of the Millennium Dance Complex, she described the relevance of hip hop for the emerging generation of dancers as part of a progressive movement, describing hip hop as “a raw force that would come to break across all pre-established boundaries

and unite cultures around the world” (“Millennium”). Hudson recalled the mid-1990s as a highly productive and exciting time for dancers because of the cross-pollination of styles, especially jazz, hip hop, and ballet. It was from this period that the studio emerged as an important center throughout the international dance world. However, during the 1990s, as this commercialized form of hip hop resulted in greater popularity and prestige, the larger studios were critiqued for assimilating community-oriented hip hop without crediting the cultural foundations of styles like B-boying, popping, and locking (Durden 189–91).

In 1999, the dance studio’s growing success motivated its owners to seek a larger, more professional building. The new studio, named the Millennium Dance Complex in anticipation of the next century, also aptly referenced the younger generation of audio-visually inclined dancers gravitating to the studio. In their first year, the studio received both hip-hop dance awards and the Best Dance Studio award. Soon after, pop music celebrities including “Janet Jackson, Prince, Christina Aguilera, P. Diddy, Alicia Keyes, and Beyoncé” began scouting dancers there for their videos and tours (“Millennium”). In a short period, the studio became the dance hive for television and film productions. For example, choreographer Robin Antin filmed several reality dance television programs and rehearsed routines for the Pussycat Dolls there. Perhaps the studio’s most prominent dancer was Michael Jackson who auditioned dancers, but also gained personal inspiration there while watching rehearsals in disguise.

Recently, the studio franchised its business model to studios in other cities with the invitation “Bring the biggest name in dance to your local market.” Currently there are dozens of Millennium franchises, many in the United States and one in Japan (“Franchise”). The complex currently boasts its brand on its website with quotations from famous video and television directors and pop celebrities. The studio’s philosophy, “unity in diversity,” displayed proudly on the walls, often appears in their YouTube dance remakes (“Our Philosophy”). The slogan reflects the studio’s progressive mission while also promoting its culturally diverse dancers, teachers, and choreographers.

The Professional Studio Choreographer – JoJo Gomez’s “*Flawless” Dance Remake**

One example of this studio’s savvy digital marketing is its online promotion of original dance sequences adapted to some of today’s most viewed pop videos. Choreographer JoJo Gomez’s dance remake of Beyoncé’s “***Flawless” exemplifies this dance remake convention (see Gomez). By borrowing musical sequences from mass-mediated videos, choreographers increase their visibility through the exploitation of online search mechanisms. The popularity of such videos also reflects the growing prestige of commercial or popular dance in the music industry. Such dance remakes further reposition the notion of authenticity and authorship attached to the original music industry-sanctioned pop videos. As previously noted, the cultural notion of authorship or creativity conditioned by the American copyright industry traditionally denied such accolades to dancers of popular culture and especially black dancers of jazz, blues, hip hop, and pop. Yet the YouTube environment emerges as a unique audiovisual context for “elevating” dance as an art form, one directly prioritizing and staging the role of the popular dance choreographer. Even as this context affords more cultural capital for

dancers and choreographers, it is this very environment of free “sharing,” self-promotion, and abundance that has increased the precarity of dancer’s careers within the entertainment industry (Fogarty, “Struggles”).

Gomez’s “***Flawless” remake fundamentally promotes contemporary music video choreography, while also staging the fierce (online) competition reflective of the modern popular dance world. However, the somewhat paradoxical values of multiculturalism and community are simultaneously performed. This video showcases not only a professional industry choreographer (Gomez), but also affirms the philosophy of the school by displaying the studio’s motto “Unity in Diversity” as the visual backdrop of the dance. This motto not only positions the studio within the intersectional politics of popular dance, but it affirms Gomez’s liberal, humanist values of tolerance and diversity through the raced positioning of bodies within this intercultural dance. These ideals are here performed in a variety of modes, such as through intercultural historical dance references or positioned textually in tag lines, websites, and bios of the dancers and schools. The tag in this video’s YouTube credits read “No Racism, No Sexism, Just Dance,” promoting dance as a vehicle for artistic expression, and for aligning itself with a politics of tolerance and cultural cohesion (JoJo Gomez). The style of the video also simultaneously highlights the themes of inclusivity and competition as several groups of dancers, presumably all students, are showcased in the pyramid fashion so that the most exceptional participants shine briefly in front of the camera. Finally, each group represents various cultural backgrounds.

Unlike many remake videos that feature amateur dancers informally performing their individual dance choreographies, the studio choreographer-led remake promotes, paradoxically and simultaneously, the exceptionalism *and* sense of community afforded by the professional popular dance world. In this video, for example, JoJo Gomez’s new choreography is performed to three (eight-bar) phrases of the original chorus of “***Flawless.” As the chorus is the section within pop songs which inspire collective singing, this chorus and its synchronized dance inspires a collective performance of feminist values. Before the dance choreography begins, snippets of the rehearsal are interspersed against sections of the song before the final phrase “equality of the sexes” from Adichie’s speech is heard. This utterance sets the stage for the impending dance, which promotes women first as actors helping to solidify gender equality through the politics of dance.

This remake’s choreography indirectly embraces intercultural dance through the grouping of dancers and the styles they perform. The first small group features Gomez as lead dancer with two young women (one black and one Asian) dancing behind her; the second group features three young white women (all blonde); the third group presents three young black women; the fourth group is two young women of different body sizes; the next group promotes seven young men of various races and cultural backgrounds; still another male group showcases three young male dancers; and finally the last group of eight young women, representing diverse cultures and races, perform only a shorter portion of the choreography. In short, the video highlights dancing as an act of inclusivity, with competition and an engagement with pop culture as important vehicles for participation. Here, too, the gender hierarchies are repositioned as women dance first, followed by the men.

Intercultural dance is also reflected by the variety of movements interspersed into this short sequence. The opening few seconds remind one that this is a professional urban dance studio, presenting snippets of individual dancers rehearsing their parts with jazz and ballet turns. After this brief opening sequence, the first three dancers assemble in a triangle and Gomez performs aggressive movements from a variety of styles from jazz and hip hop and to creative dance. After the initial quick edits of the opening, the dancers engage in the more aggressive, masculine-associated quick footwork and high energy bursts of krumping. These are then followed by the acrobatic floor rolls and high kicks of gymnastics. Finally, the first group also performs short soloistic, voguing-like passages allowing for the sensual expression of the body through, for example, the slapping of buttocks, the torso-folded hair tosses, and the provocative open mouth and protruding lip poses. These brief solo passages act as transitions for the next group to enter the space in front of the camera. The sheer variety of references to these diverse styles foregrounds the intercultural ethos of this dance and its participants. Multiculturalism is literally staged in the transitions from one dance style to the next. Finally, the “sonic color line” too emerges as a potent signifier of this dance, as young male white dancers imitate black affective expressions such as hand snapping or hair tossing as both a respectful nod or playful satire of Beyoncé’s original attitudinizing. Viewers of this dance enjoy the racial sonic code switching as they watch and hear the dance past evoked in this modern collective choreography.

To date, the video has been watched by 1.3 million viewers and presumably many of these viewers share an interest in both Beyoncé’s music videos and in dance as an aesthetic remix community. By staging this new choreography to Beyoncé’s globally circulating musical sequence, Gomez, the studio, and these young dancers generate “media power” because of how their online dance reconfigures the cultural and affective meanings attached to the existing musical sequence. Such power is only realized as significant numbers of viewers watch and react to such remakes. Finally, because Beyoncé’s mass audience already exists (the Beyhive), Gomez and the Millennium Dance Complex exploit the potential of media convergence to promote an alternative biopolitics of dance, this time enacted for dance receptive audiences whose passion for Beyoncé, for pop music, and for popular dance reside symbiotically at the intersections of pop culture and dance as a participatory practice; here such newly configured intersectional values build upon but diverge from Beyoncé’s exceptional, yet music industry-driven dance ethos.

In the Gomez version, a number of values are performed. First, the arrangement of dancers marks cultural diversity as an attribute of the performance space; this appears as a clear connection to Beyoncé’s multiculturalism and feminist politics, although the viewer’s recognition of this remix’s “sonic color line” delimits the pre-eminence of Beyoncé as a powerful black woman and as the lead arbiter of dance’s cultural power. Second, by positioning Gomez as a woman and as lead choreographer in a field often dominated by men, she acquires props and visibility in this male-dominated world. Finally, by dancing first the routine and then showcasing a range of other raced, aged, sexed bodies, Gomez presents herself as part of the larger project of commandeering dance as a more liberal, yet arguably neoliberal, ethics of intense

competition. This competition encourages the viewer to prioritize the most virtuosic dancer – the one positioned at the top of the pyramid.

Part of the goal of online dance remakes is to promote the brand of emerging choreographers. Gomez's bio reveals her extensive experience with the film and music industry as well as with professional dance troupes. She has performed for Justin Bieber, *Glee*, and the Radio Disney Music Awards, and she has choreographed for both films and advertising campaigns. Finally, Gomez positions herself as a teacher of the Millennium Complex community in LA, where she lives but also at many of its franchises from Dallas to Salt Lake City. The connection between performing one's star quality and giving back as a teacher in an inclusive yet highly competitive neoliberal environment is reflected in her bio:

JoJo strongly believes in her students, challenges them, pushes them, and ultimately educates them through positivity and light. She prides herself in teaching her students discipline, respect, and a hard work ethic through the art of dance. Her style of movement focuses on power, strength, musicality, performance, and channeling your inner superstar! ("JoJo Gomez")⁶

Within YouTube, such choreograph-driven dance remakes provide visibility for the middle-layer of semi-professional to professional arts participants within the transmedial environment of music and dance. Consistent with the history of popular dance within the film industry, these dances are frequently inspired by both more informal black vernacular⁷ dances (such as krumping) and more professional presentational styles (such as jazz, ballet, and now hip hop); they, too, must negotiate of the sonic-color line. Finally, such remakes reposition the role of the professional commercial choreographer as agents with the potential to brand themselves online and thus wield significant media power. By publicly and discursively staging media power, dance choreographers emerge as increasingly prominent actors within the music industry. In this sense, dance remakes attempt to reposition the hierarchies of authorship, agency, and stardom attributed to dancers as agents of creativity and innovation.

The Online Community Dance Remake

While many dance remakes adhere to this choreographic-centered dance studio promotional style, others serve primarily to connect, document, and promote members of local music and dance communities, especially youth dancers not necessarily connected to the professional music video or the commercial dance industry. For example, creative dance teams are part of many high school programs and many of these engage with popular culture in their yearly performances. Dance teams, as predominantly homosocial environments for young women, forge important artistic and social bonds within their communities. Especially in the southern United States, the highly competitive black creative dance troupes are some of the best in the world, and they compete in city, region, and state competitions. They often perform at the half-time performances of school sporting events or for other community events such as pep rallies, spring recitals, or dance competitions. Since 2014, *Bring It!*, Fox's reality television series, dramatized the intensity and fierceness of such battles (with the typical sensationalized backstage

dramas), while also revealing the collaborative aesthetic and feminine bonding facilitated through such programs.

YouTube contains thousands of community dance performances choreographed to remixes of mainstream pop music hits. The Starline New Beginnings Spring Dance Recital in 2015 is a representative, if not exemplary, example, one that connects itself to the existing musical community of the Jersey Club music style popular in the last two decades. In this community dance performance, a dance troupe performs Brandon Bonner's choreography to a remix of "***Flawless" created by DJ Lil Taj from Newark, New Jersey (see "[Flawless DJ Taj's Remix](#)"). All but one of its seven competent dancers is young women. Brandon Bonner, the one male dancer and choreographer of the performance, is featured center-stage in a video likely recorded by a family member from the audience. It was therefore probably not intended as a professional promotional dance video. This video's heavily remixed tracks produced by DJ Taj rework Beyoncé's original tracks into a recognizable high-energy, up-tempo, Jersey Club version.

Jersey Club

The Jersey Club style originated in Newark, New Jersey, during the 1990s as a club-oriented breakbeat music and dance culture. At first deeply influenced by Chicago house, Jersey Club created musical mixes that favored fast aggressive beats, bass-heavy hip hop samples, loud triplet kick drums hits, and heavy use of splicing. The music, initially developed by mostly black and Latino youth of various Newark neighborhoods, attracted dancers and participants representing a wide-range of racial and cultural backgrounds. At the end of the decade, a circuit of parties for young kids emerged, promoted as safe and gender inclusive spaces for fun, sociality, and dance. Eventually in the 2000s, producers and DJs incorporated digital software programs, especially FL Studio or Sony Acid Pro, to modernize and more flexibly edit mixes for both local and international audiences ([Steyels](#)).

In 2016, SUB.Culture's documentary depicted Jersey Club's international expansion, featuring interviews with some of the core DJs who first developed the sound in earlier decades. These DJs expressed both awe and frustration that their style was adapted by others outside of New Jersey, spawning a global phenomenon in the 2010s. Most aggravating was that those who benefited most economically, especially in the European dance music festival circuits, were not connecting back with the music's originators, let alone crediting the music's origins. SUB.Culture's documentary raised important questions concerning popular music's ability to mediate the cultural values of local communities, especially those forging creative styles despite the pervasiveness of dominant media.

Considering the continuing politics of power and authorship within digital music distribution networks, we can see that pride of place and artistic progeny remain strong themes in off- and on-line discourse. Feelings of resentment by local arts participants are, of course, not new within popular music, but YouTube ushers in a new dynamic, one elegantly examined by cultural theorist Kyra Gaunt in her article on the cultural appropriation of black girls' dance in the online environment. In her analysis of the reception of Miley Cyrus's twerking performance at the MVA awards, ([Gaunt](#)) defines

the concept “context collapse” in order to reveal how such heavily mediated and “high profile enactments” of black girls’ culture often “eclipse the co-presence of user-generated videos” which more accurately reflect black girls “musical roots on and off-line” (244–45). She details how social network sites enable a “deep and loose” community of “connection without constraint” (250).

Steven [Feld](#) famously theorized the absence of thick contexts enabled by digital sampling processes within world music (and now within music videos of the digital archive) as a form of “schizophonia” or “schismogenesis,” a restructuring of the goals and values connected to artistic experiences facilitated through digital media ([Feld](#)). The “schizophonia” or “context collapse” undergirding the circulation and evaluation of black dance within YouTube reflects the complexity of today’s digital media environment whose gatekeepers appear more diffuse and whose processes of distribution fail to cohere strictly to the local cultural values of particular music and dance communities. In fact, despite dance music’s displays of multiculturalism, tolerance, and diversity, as Gaunt reveals, reinterpreting localized black cultural styles without commitment to the communal values of such styles is made easier and faster in the digital landscape.

Despite the dissemblance of values afforded by “context collapse,” such diffuse yet accessible digital contexts also enable new kinds of communal cultural affiliations. When distributed through user-generated content, remakes of mainstream pop music videos became the most common material uploaded to YouTube in the 2010s. For example, the CLUBJERSEY YouTube channel created by Arghtee, promotes the danceable Jersey Club remix sound and much of the uploaded remixes adapt material from urban pop music videos. In 2016, music promoter and DJ Arghtee claimed that the CLUBJERSEY sound was supported by 66% female fans. In a unique reversal of the gendered critique usually attached to such statistics, Arghtee actually boasted this figure as a positive indication of the music’s worth and as motivation for party promoters and radio stations to play CLUBJERSEY tracks. When interviewed by Josh Baines about CLUBJERSEY’s particular gender balance, Arghtee responded,

To be honest I think the high female listener count has to do with there being a lot of remixes of pop tracks. The majority of people that recognize the brand in real life are usually female and the usual feedback they give us is that they love the twist on tracks they *already know* [my emphasis], and are able to *dance* [my emphasis] to them. This obviously translates into who comes to the parties that we do. (qtd. in [Baines](#))

The connection between Jersey Club as a “brand” recognized by women as well as one that re-territorializes global pop hits and encourages women to actively participate (through social dance) in musical styles often recorded and performed by women speaks both to the gendered dynamics of popular music and dance as a participatory art form. It also repositions the cultural capital of pop music as a corpus of songs which provide templates for innovation, creativity, and dialogical engagement. Further, dancing to such remakes provides meaningful social bonding for young women and girls. Bonding through the bodily re-enactment of feminine-identified pop songs has long provided a role for girls in various decades, such as during the 1960s with the rise of the immensely popular but since under-valued girl groups of both Motown and the Brill building ([Warwick](#)).

Continuing in this progressive vein, in the *Thump* interview, Arghtee also provided insight into how promoters could better balance the gender participation of the club world:

First off you would need to talk to female promoters as they would know better than me; Girls Do It Better from Paris and Discwoman from New York come to mind. Secondly, I think it's just about respect. There's a lot of respect that comes from Jersey and letting girls do their own thing when they dance, and it's something we've tried to carry over to our own parties.

Since such sentiments, which openly embrace a feminist vision of musical sociality, are uncommon in popular music journalistic discourse, it is likely that JERSEYCLUB's philosophy strengthened the connection between this once localized remix community and the community-oriented, gendered dance performances online; it is therefore perhaps not surprising that one of JERSEYCLUB's biggest hits was DJ Taj's remix of Beyoncé's "***Flawless," which was first uploaded on YouTube on 29 March 2014 and has since garnered over 4.1 million views (see "DJ Lil Taj").

Taj's remix was popularized by several amateur dance troupes who added their own online choreographies to his track. Judging from the material posted to his SoundCloud profile, Taj consistently releases remakes of a variety of black music performers from the internationally successful R&B singers and female urban pop artists (Rihanna and Beyoncé) to the more sensual tracks of Drake and the queer parodies of StarrKeisha (see "DJ Taj."). From this pantheon of diverse artists, one might argue that rather than digging in the crates for rare and unusual or little-known tracks by mostly male artists, DJ Taj rather chose both well-known and lesser known artists that cohered with his unarticulated, yet intersectional approach toward popular music identity politics.

Jersey Club Meets Creative Dance

The Starline New Beginnings dance remake to this Jersey Club remix typifies the style of many southern athletic or creative dance troupes. This faster tempo of the Jersey Club genre works well with the dancers' athletic moves inspired by gymnastics, hip hop, African dance, stepping, and jazz. Within the video, the dancers execute splits, high kicks, energetic extended synchronized arm movements, and the high-stepped jazz walk. The footwork accentuates the step and tap movement emphasizing this four to the floor bass drum pattern. Eventually the drum-line influenced choreography transitions to the floor for splits and a display of synchronized legs kicking high above the torso. At one point, the best dancers occupy the front row, but not in a solo position. No improvised movements are present, which accentuates the collective orientation of the dance. In short, the remake of "***Flawless" in this more up-tempo, lively version, provides engagement with pop culture while repositioning the predominantly female dancers within the culture of Jersey Club, a local dance music phenomenon, which has spread in popularity in EDM contexts all over the world. However, here YouTube makes visible its local community ethos and its potential for a performed feminist biopolitics by combining the enlightened gendered values of Jersey Club with a social, collective dance which openly promotes the work of recognizable black women pop stars in a catchy and highly energetic, community-inspiring form. Of course, by

integrating Beyoncé's feminist body politics, this community-oriented dance links back to the local music culture of Jersey Club (as a feminist music culture); yet it also adopts Beyoncé as an important symbol of black culture. Here, references to Beyoncé's music and dance evoke notions of pride and resistance; aesthetically her music also provides material for experimentation and creative adaptation.

While the "context collapse" (misreading, commodification, and hyper-sexualization) resulting from dispersals of online black dance (such as twerking) by the mainstream industry speaks to one kind of public sphere enabled by social media, these dance remakes speak to another and perhaps more socially binding engagement. By remaking the most explicitly feminist inspired part of Beyoncé's "***Flawless" (the dance chorus and Adichie's TEDx speech) and then flexibly altering the musical soundscape as well as cutting up particular phrases from the original text, the dancers and DJ engage in a long tradition of signifying (Gates). Through their interactive versions, dancers and DJs further redirect the biopolitics promoted by the industry, incorporating only those parts that most appeal to their collective dance. The support for such collective bonding through dance is evidenced by YouTube comments such as "ENERGY IS TROW [sic] THE ROOF" or "Nice job ladies! The choreography was dope!" This transmediated discourse substantiates the community spirit and collective energy of those who celebrate these dancers' innovations and skills. Because of the impressive technique displayed by the single male dancer, many YouTube participants refer exclusively to his talent ("bruh the boy killed it . . . FLAWLESS"; "THE BOY WAS SLAYING MY LIFE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!") (Comments to Emahn Sade' video, "Flawless DJ Taj's Remix."). His dance seems to overshadow the girls in this otherwise feminine gendered intertextual performance. Yet by supporting this young man, whose masculinity might otherwise be challenged in this feminine gendered genre, inclusivity and tolerance remain the pervasive values. Finally, as this enthusiastic high school audience witnesses black girls dancing to "I Woke Up Like This," a phrase which is slowly decomposed into tiny musical rhythmic molecules in the now internationally trendy Jersey Club style, the "four-to-the-floor" pattern turns this text into a kind of pep rally mantra. Judging by the audience's response, the EDM remake and collective dance works to instill typical collegiate pride and excitement into this recital, yet underlying this chant is the broader signification and recognition of the power of black popular dance for black American culture. By cutting it up and prioritizing the dance of young women, Beyoncé and her work is repositioned as only a part of this larger tradition of collective dance.

Conclusion

Despite the popularity of the "***Flawless" dance sequence within the remix YouTube community, Beyoncé's recent visual albums generally neglect collective dance sequences in favor of more elaborate narrative characterizations afforded by mise-en-scène and the stylistic cues adopted from film. While debates regarding Beyoncé's complex and contradictory feminism persist, her bodily artistic dance-centered work indirectly vies for an individualistic negotiation of a performed intersectionality. Her visual albums especially comment upon the longstanding "othering" strategies of the industry. The pleasure of deciphering these art works relies upon the continued recognition of the sonic color-line.

In the dialogical engagements of young African-American women or of highly competitive commercial dance choreographers and in the myriad counter publics promoted by the international YouTube community, the empowering potential of dance offers physical embodiments for citation and reterritorialization. These remakes suggest that pop stars, through the intensive professional guidance of the music and film industry, construct their unique and individual stories about race, sex, class, and gender; and then such poetics enter the world of imagination through kinesis, collaboration, and cultural negotiation. In short, Beyoncé's feminism enters the public sphere and is subject to all the vicissitudes and negotiations of humanity. Eventually the overwhelming force of neoliberalism reasserts the resilience paradigm, as ever younger, ever more flexible, skillful girls labor under the demands of global capitalism.

As high-quality films of compelling and talented dancers compete within the global video archive with amateur dance classes and bedroom routines, the market seeks to overrun participatory culture's messy diversity with formulaic, yet entertaining high budget narratives. Informal dance cultures simultaneously establish media power by adapting collective dance online to redefine their creative space despite neoliberalism's mandate that those most marginalized symbolically and individually overcome their collective precarity. Beyoncé's own complicated positioning with regards an embodied (hip hop) feminist performance practice inspires us to interrogate how participatory artists active within the YouTube archive discursively attach new meanings to such work by positioning an alternative biopolitics through the act of collective dance. By connecting the cultural work of online dance remakes to the interests of global music industry stars, a critical reflection on the changing status of social media for negotiating online power relations enables us to assist in elevating the important cultural work performed by dance within popular culture. It also enables us to reverse the *collapse* of important local black music *contexts* often willingly overlooked or displaced within such diffuse online networks.

Notes

1. For a well-rounded summary of these debates see [Hobson](#).
2. In 1984, upon the success of Michael Jackson's dance-dominated videos, the MTV Video Music Award for Best Choreographer emerged, a prominent accolade for a previously under-valued role. See [George](#) for a historical overview of the growing influence and adaptation of jazz dance within commercial music video during the 1980s and 1990s. Although commercial dance choreographers were rarely recognized for their work during the MTV era, mainstream "pop jazz" choreographies began to acquire widespread visibility and financial reward in subsequent decades. Moncell Durden posits an evolutionary development of black dance from the vernacular dance styles of the early twentieth century to the funk moves of James Brown and the soul moves of *Soul Train* dancer Jeffrey Daniels. Durden claims that Jackson's most famous move, the "moonwalk," was actually his unique version of the long-established jazz move the "backslide," a sequence used by dancers during the 1930s on to exit the stage with verve, humour, and novelty (189).
3. According to Marquita Smith, these skinheads are members of the Parisian-based Anti-Racist Skinhead Alliance ([Smith](#) 234–35). Their appearance in this feminist sequence therefore redefines punk with an extended cosmopolitanism and progressive politics because of their mixed-gendered, non-American membership.

4. All of these authors examine the racial body politics of the dance-inspired “Walk It Off Fosse,” a YouTube remix video, which synchronized DJ Unk’s hip hop track, “Walk It Off” (2006), to a 1969 televised Bob Fosse choreographed dance segment, “Mexican Breakfast,” performed by Gwen Verdon and others.
5. Ovalle cited the concept of the sonic color-line from Jennifer Stoever’s PhD Dissertation “The Contours of the Sonic Color-Line: Slavery, Segregation, and the Cultural Politics of Listening.” Stoever has since expanded this concept in her book *The Sonic Color Line*.
6. Gomez is represented by the Clear Talent Group, franchised by the America Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) the Writers Guild of America (WGA). Her bio is featured on its website (see “JoJo Gomez: Biography”).
7. In *Dancing on the Canon*, Sherril Dodds unpacks the cultural values attributed to labels such as “social,” “vernacular,” and “popular,” which are designed to distinguish such dance forms from Western art dance. These terms, of course, reveal deeper processes of canonization and prioritization within the dance academy. In such studies, vernacular dance often refers to informal dance cultures initiated by untrained dancers in contexts outside of the professional theatrical stages. Popular dances often incorporate aspects of both social and vernacular dance, yet popular dances frequently relate to a canon of popular music recordings. Further, popular dances are often mediated through platforms such as music videos and online dance tutorials. (Dodds) convincingly argues that each of these dance styles have responded to processes of mediation and professionalization (47–50).

Acknowledgments

I want to express my sincere gratitude especially to the co-editors of this issue Christina Baade and Marquita Smith who provided several thorough reviews of this article. Their insights greatly improved its overall clarity and argumentation. I am also grateful for the constructive criticisms of Chris Tonelli and of the peer reviewers of this article and to the journal’s editors.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Kristin McGee is an Associate Professor of Popular Music at the University of Groningen. She has published on the subject of women in jazz in audiovisual media in her book *Some Liked it Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television, 1928 to 1959* (Wesleyan UP 2009). She is currently writing a monograph for Routledge entitled *Remixing European Jazz Culture*.

Works cited

- Baines, Josh. “We Investigated the Stats Which Suggest that Jersey Club Is More Popular with Women than Men.” *Thump Magazine* 27 Jan. 2016. Web. 1 Jul. 2017. <https://thump.vice.com/en_us/article/we-investigated-the-stats-which-suggest-jersey-club-is-more-popular-with-women-than-men>
- Beyoncé. “***Flawless.” *BEYONCÉ*. Directed by Jake Nava, choreography by Les Twins, Beyoncé, and Chris Grant Columbia, Music Video 2013.
- Brown, Jennifer Jayna. *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008.

- Carroll, Samantha. "The Practical Politics of Step-Stealing and Textual Poaching: YouTube, Audio-Visual Media and Contemporary Swing Dancers Online." *Convergence* 14.2 (2008): 183–204. doi: [10.1177/1354856507087943](https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856507087943).
- Coburn, Dylan. "Part Three of Our Jersey Club Documentary Delves into How the Genre Went Global." *Vice*, 6 Jun. 2015. Web. 21 Jun. 2017. <https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/4x8egj/part-three-of-our-jersey-club-documentary-delves-into-how-the-genre-went-global>
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989): 139–67.
- Davis, Angela. *Blue Legacies and Black Feminisms: Gertrude Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1998.
- "DJ Lil Taj Feat. Panic –Flawless (I Woke Up Like This)." *YouTube*, uploaded by CLUBJERSEY, 29 Mar. 2014. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdkYDyMBx90>>
- "DJ Taj." *SoundCloud*. Web. 18 Nov. 2018. <<https://soundcloud.com/teamtaj>>
- Dodds, Sherril. *Dancing on the Canon: Embodiments of Value in Popular Dance*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.
- Durden, Moncell. "Hip Hop Dance as Community Expression and Global Phenomenon." *Jazz Dance: A History of the Roots and Branches*, Ed. Lindsay Guarino and Wendy Oliver. Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2014. 184–93.
- Durham, Aisha. "Check on It: Beyoncé, Southern Booty, and Black Femininities in Music Video." *Feminist Media Studies* 12.1 (2012): 35–49. doi: [10.1080/14680777.2011.558346](https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2011.558346).
- Feld, Steven. "From Schizophonia to Schismogenesis: Notes on the Discourses of World Music and World Beat." *Music Grooves*, Ed. Charles Keil and Steven Feld. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994. 257–89.
- "Flawless DJ Taj's Remix." *Starline New Beginnings Spring Show 2015*. Choreography by Brandon Bonner, *YouTube*, uploaded by Emahn Sade', Web. 10 May 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKwYWX7-rmw>>
- Fogarty, Mary. "Gene Kelly: The Original, Updated." *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen*, Ed. Melissa Blanco Borelli. New York: Oxford UP, 2014. 83–97.
- . "The Struggles of Independent Dance Artists: A Toronto Snapshot." *Dance Equity Quarterly* 11.1 (2017): 16–19.
- . *Unlikely Resemblances with Beyoncé: Judgement and Pleasure in Popular Dance*. Unpublished article.
- "Franchise." *The Millennium Dance Complex*. Web. 15 Jun. 2017. <<http://millenniumdancecomplex.com/franchise/>>
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.
- Gaunt, Kyra. "YouTube, Twerking and You: Context Collapse and the Handheld Co-Presence of Black Girls and Miley Cyrus." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 27.3 (2015): 244–73. doi: [10.1111/jpms.12130](https://doi.org/10.1111/jpms.12130).
- George, Melanie. "Jazz Dance, Pop Culture, and the Music Video Era." *Jazz Dance: A History of the Roots and Branches*, Ed. Lindsay Guarino and Wendy Oliver. Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2014. 174–83.
- Gomez, JoJo. "Flawless – @ Beyoncé by JoJo Gomez." *YouTube*, uploaded by JoJo Gomez, 17 May 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKcGOP5N-R8>>
- Griffin, Farrah Jasmine. *Harlem Nocturne: Women Artist and Progressive Politics during World War II*. New York: Basic Books, 2013.
- Hall, Stuart. "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture." *Social Justice* 20.1/2 (1993): 104–14.
- Harrison, Daphne Duval. *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1990.
- Hobson, Janell. "Feminists Debate Beyoncé." *The Beyoncé Effect: Essays on Sexuality, Race and Feminism*, Ed. Adrienne Trier-Bieniek. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016. 11–26.

- Hubbard, Karenand, and Terry Monaghan. "Negotiating Compromise on a Burnished Wood Floor: Social Dancing at the Savoy." *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader*, Ed. Julie Malnig. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2008. 126–145.
- James, Robin. *Resilience & Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism*. Hants: Zero Books, 2015.
- Jenkins, Henry. *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York UP, 2006b.
- "JoJo Gomez: Biography." Clear Talent Group. Web. 14 May 2018. <<http://cleartalentgroup.com/client/jojo-gomez-educator>>
- Kofsky, Frank. *Black Music, White Business: Illuminating the History and Political Economy of Jazz*. New York: Pathfinder, 1998.
- Kraut, Anthea. "'Stealing Steps' and Signature Moves: Embodied Theories of Dance as Intellectual Property." *Theatre Journal* 62.2 (2010): 163–79.
- Lessig, Lawrence. *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. New York: Penguin Group, 2008.
- "The Millennium Story." *The Millennium Dance Complex*. Web. 15 Jun. 2017. <<http://millenniumdancecomplex.com/about/the-millennium-story/>>
- Navas, Eduardo. *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling*. Vienna: Springer-Wien, 2012.
- "Our Philosophy." *The Millennium Dance Complex*. Web. 15 Jun. 2017. <http://millenniumdancecomplex.com/about/philosophy/>
- Ovalle, Priscilla Peña. "Aurally, Visually, Virally: Choreographing Race from Fosse to Beyoncé." *Flow TV*, 5 Apr. 2009. Web. 6 June 2009. <<http://flowtv.org/?p=3308>>
- Pough, Gwendolyn. *Check It while I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*. Lebanon: Northeastern UP, 2004.
- Pullen, Kirsten. "'If Ya Liked It, Then You Shoulda Made a Video:' Beyoncé Knowles, YouTube and the Public Sphere of Images." *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* 16.2 (2011): 145–53. doi: 10.1080/13528165.2011.578846.
- Smith, Marquita R. "BEYONCÉ: Hip Hop Feminism and the Embodiment of Black Femininity." *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music and Gender*, Ed. Stan Hawkins. New York: Routledge, 2017. 229–41.
- Steyels, Mike. "Jersey Club: From Newark to the World." *Resident Advisor*, 7 Feb. 2015. Web. 15 Jun. 2017. <https://www.residentadvisor.net/features/2268>
- Stoever, Jennifer. "The Contours of the Sonic Color-Line: Slavery, Segregation, and the Cultural Politics of Listening." PhD diss. U of Southern California, 2006.
- . *The Sonic Color Line: Race the Cultural Politics of Listening*. New York: New York UP, 2016.
- Thomas, Phillippa. "Single Ladies, Plural: Racism, Scandal, and 'Authenticity' within the Multiplication and Circulation of Online Dance Discourses." *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen*, Ed. Melissa Blanco Borelli. New York: Oxford UP, 2014. 289–303.
- Warwick, Jacqueline. *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s*. New York: Routledge, 2007.